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**STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**  
**APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION**  
**FIELD COURSE**

**ICS ORIENTATION**

**MODULE 1**  
**I-100**

**PARTICIPANT**  
**REFERENCE**  
**MANUAL**  
**2003**

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**PARTICIPANT REFERENCE MANUAL**

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# **Participant Information**

## **Introduction to Reference Text**

ICS Orientation is designed to help you learn the principles of the Incident Command System and to briefly acquaint you with the basic ICS structure and terminology.

The majority of the reference text is to be used as a note-taking guide, but other practical information and exercises are included that replicate situations you may encounter in any incident. Many of these concepts are applicable in planning and conducting planned events as well.

To measure how well you received and retained this information, there will be an examination covering the module material.

We hope you will have a good learning experience that helps you accomplish your job more effectively.

## **Course Description**

This module is intended for personnel assigned to an incident or event who are required to have a minimal understanding ICS. This module reviews the ICS organization, basic terminology, and common responsibilities. It will provide enough information about the Incident Command System to enable you to work in a support role at an incident or event, or to support an incident from an off-site location.

Personnel who will be continuing their ICS training may also use this module as a pre-course study program.

## **Target Audience**

This is an orientation for entry-level personnel assisting at an incident or event, persons working in support roles, and off-incident personnel who require a minimum understanding of ICS.

## **Suggested Prerequisite Modules**

This is the first of seventeen modules of the SEMS Field Training Curriculum. It is recommended that the SEMS Introductory Course be taken prior to the Field Course. Modules 1-15 have been adopted from the ICS National Training Curriculum.

There are other ICS National Training Curriculum materials that will help you understand this course material more easily. You may wish to obtain copies of the following documents:

- ICS Development Paper
- ICS Glossary
- ICS Forms Manual
- ICS Position Descriptions & Responsibilities

Contact the person assigned to administer and assist you with completing this self-paced instruction for help in acquiring copies of the documents listed above, or other support documents unique to your discipline.

# Instructional Objectives

At the conclusion of this self-study module, you should be able to do the following:

1. List the five major organizational activities within the Incident Command System and explain their primary functions.
2. Give the titles, and explain the duties of Command and General Staff members.
3. Match organizational units to appropriate Operations, Logistics, Planning/Intelligence, or Finance/Administration Sections.
4. Match supervisory titles with appropriate levels within the organization.
5. Describe the terms used to name major incident facilities, and state the function of each.
6. Describe what an Incident Action Plan is and how it is used at an incident.
7. Describe how the concept of "span of control" functions within the incident organization.
8. Describe the common responsibilities (general instructions) associated with incident or event assignments.
9. Describe several applications for the use of ICS.

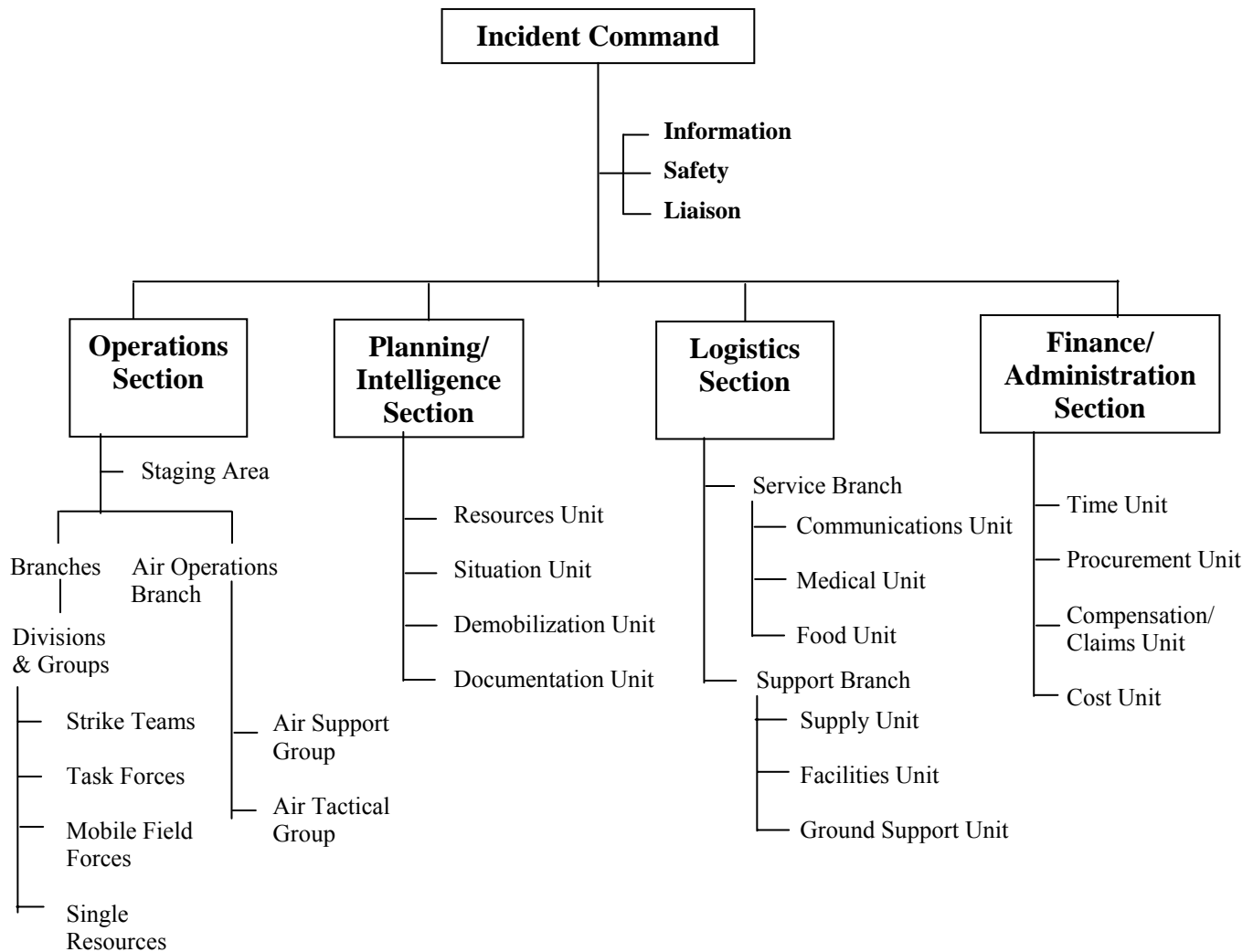
## Delivery Method

This module is self-paced.

## Duration

This module can be completed in two to four hours of self-paced study time.

# INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM ORGANIZATION



*Incident Command System Organization (Figure 1-1)*

# ICS Orientation

## I. Introduction

The Incident Command System is used to manage an emergency incident or a non-emergency event. It can be used for both small and large situations.

The system has considerable internal flexibility. It can grow or shrink to meet differing needs. This makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management system. The system can be applied to a wide variety of emergency and non-emergency situations. Listed below are some examples of the kinds of incidents and events that can use the ICS:

### **APPLICATIONS FOR THE USE OF THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM**

- Fires, HAZMAT, and multi-casualty incidents
- Multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency disasters
- Wide-area search and rescue missions
- Pest eradication programs
- Oil spill response and recovery incidents
- Single and multi-agency law enforcement incidents
- Air, rail, water, or ground transportation accidents
- Planned events; e.g., celebrations, parades, concerts
- Private sector emergency management programs
- State or local major natural hazards management.

*Application for the Use of the Incident Command System (Figure 1-2)*

ICS has a number of features that will be covered in this module. Major areas to be covered include:

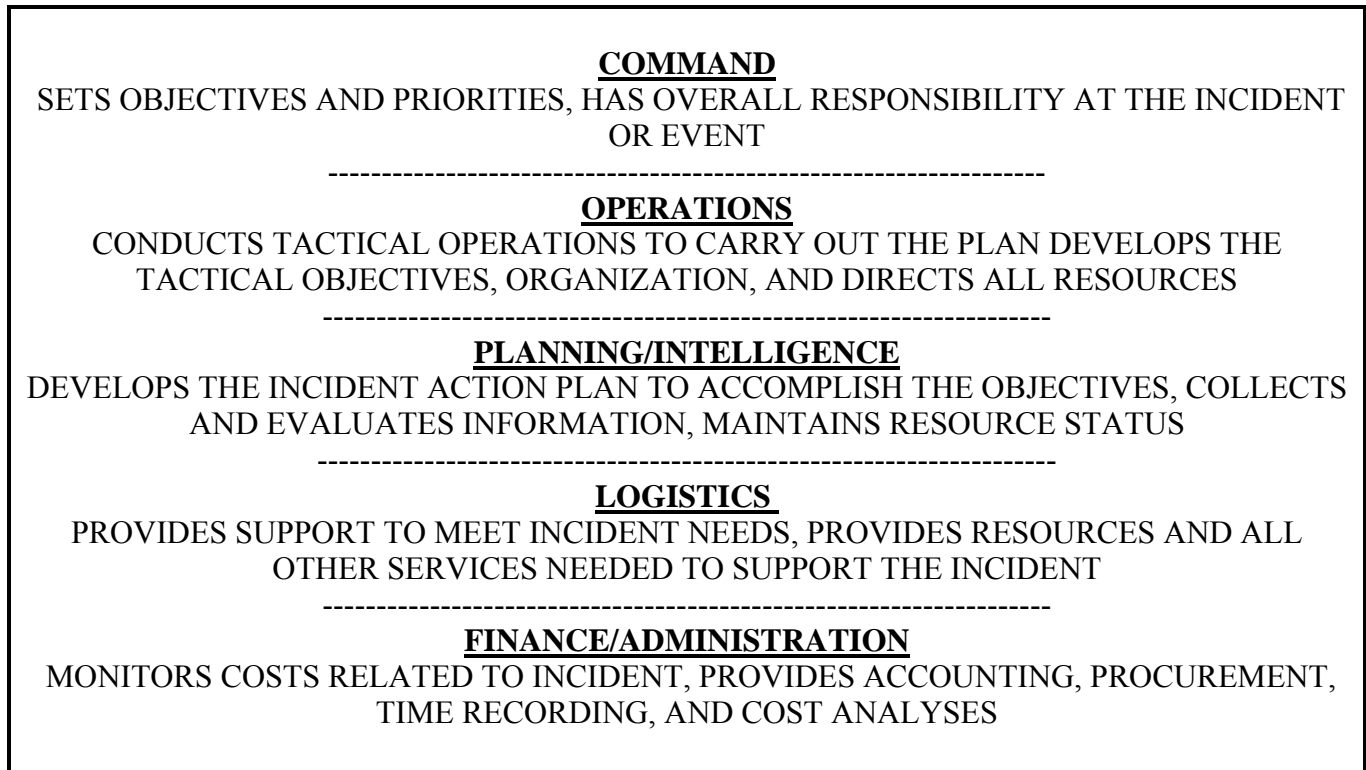
- ICS Organization
- Incident Facilities
- The Incident Action Plan
- Span of Control
- Common Responsibilities
- Applications

## II. ICS Organization

Every incident or event has certain major management activities or actions that must be performed. Even if the event is very small, and only one or two people are involved, these activities will still always apply to some degree.



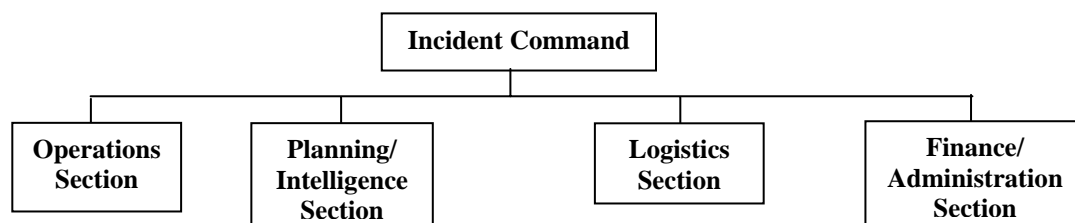
The organization of the Incident Command System is built around five major management activities. These are depicted in Figure 1-3.



*Incident Command System Major Activities (Figure 1-3)*

These five major management activities are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. They apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major event, or managing a major response to a disaster.

On small incidents, one person, the Incident Commander (IC), may manage all these major activities. Large incidents usually require that these activities be set up as separate Sections within the organization as shown in Figure 1-4.



*ICS Sections (Figure 1-4)*

Each of the primary ICS Sections may be sub-divided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic guideline of ICS is, that the person in charge of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller situations where additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will directly manage all aspects of the incident organization.

Now we will look at each of the major functional entities of the ICS organization starting with the Incident Commander and the Command Staff.

The basic design of ICS incorporates an interagency approach to incident management. This occurs throughout the system at command, section or branch levels and in interagency resource applications.

#### A. Incident Commander and the Command Staff

##### Incident Commander

The Incident Commander is the person in charge at the incident, and must be fully qualified to manage the incident. As incidents grow in size or become more complex, a more highly qualified Incident Commander may be assigned by the responsible jurisdiction or agency. The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputies must always be as qualified as the person for whom they work.

The Incident Commander may assign personnel for both a Command Staff and a General Staff. The Command Staff provides Information, Safety, and Liaison services for the entire organization. The General Staff are assigned major functional authority for Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

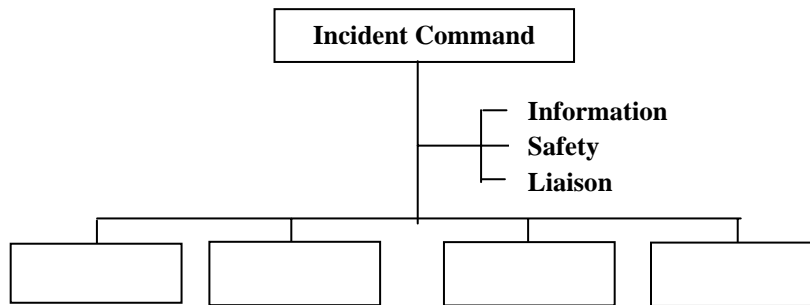
Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander. As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to others as required.

Taking over command at an incident always requires that there be a full briefing for the incoming Incident Commander, and notification that a change in command is taking place.

##### Command Staff

In addition to the primary incident response activities of Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration, the Incident Commander has responsibility for several other important services. Depending on the size and type of an incident or event, it may be necessary to designate personnel to handle these additional activities.

Persons filling these positions are designated as the Command Staff and are called Officers, and should not be assigned to other positions within the ICS structure. The Command Staff is shown in Figure 1-5. There is only one Command Staff position for each of these functions. The Command Staff does not have deputies. However, each of these positions may have one or more assistants if necessary. On large incidents or events, it is not uncommon to see several assistants working for Command Staff Officers. Additional Command Staff may be added based on incident needs, e.g., Legal Officer, Executive Officer, etc.



*ICS Command Staff (Figure 1-5)*

- **Information Officer** - The Information Officer will be the point of contact for the media, or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event. Although several agencies may assign personnel to an incident or event as Information Officers, there will only be one Incident Information Officer. Others will serve as assistants.
- **Safety Officer** - This individual monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
- **Liaison Officer** - On larger incidents or events, representatives from other agencies (usually called Agency Representatives) may be assigned to the incident to coordinate their agency's involvement. The Liaison Officer will be their primary contact.

#### B. The General Staff

The people who perform the four major activities of Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration are designated as the General Staff.

#### **THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM GENERAL STAFF**

- **Operations Section Chief**
- **Planning/Intelligence Section Chief**
- **Logistics Section Chief**
- **Finance/Administration Section Chief**

*ICS General Staff (Figure 1-6)*

Each of the General Staff positions may have one or more Deputy positions if necessary. The role of the deputy position is flexible. The deputy can work with the primary position, work in a relief capacity, or be assigned specific tasks. Deputies should always be as qualified as the person for whom they work.

In large events, especially where multiple agencies or jurisdictions are involved, assigning Deputies from other agencies can greatly increase interagency coordination.

At the Section level, the person in charge will be designated as a Chief. For example, in the Logistics Section, the person in charge will always be called the Logistics Section Chief.

Within the ICS organization, there are a number of organizational elements that can be activated as necessary. Each of the major Sections has the ability to expand internally to meet the needs of the situation.

Note however that it is not necessary to activate a section if only a single unit of that section is required. For example, the Incident Commander can establish two geographic divisions for purposes of better defining the incident without first establishing an Operations Section. If the IC does not designate Division Supervisors, he/she will direct all resources assigned to the division.

Similarly, if the IC requires only a Communications Unit there is no need to first establish a Logistics Section. The Communications Unit Leader will report to the IC until a Logistics Section Chief is designated.

Let's start with the Operations Section of the ICS organization.

## 1. Operations Section

The Incident Commander will determine the need for a separate Operations Section at an incident or event. Until Operations is established as a separate Section, the IC will have direct control of tactical resources.

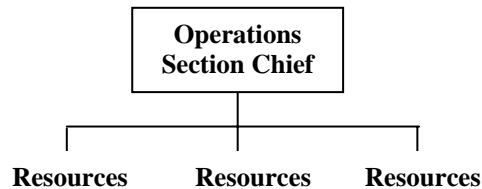
When activating an Operations Section, the IC will assign an individual as the Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief will develop and manage the Operations Section to accomplish the incident objectives.

There is only one Operations Section Chief for each operational period. That person is normally (but not always) from the jurisdiction or agency that has the greatest involvement either in terms of resources assigned or area of concern. The Operations Section Chief may assign a Deputy from the same agency, or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Using Deputies from other agencies often helps in the coordination of actions.

Within the Operations Section, two additional levels of organization can be used as necessary. These are Divisions and/or Groups, and Branches.

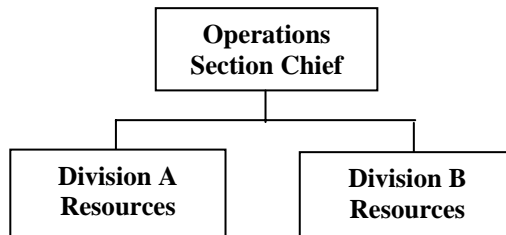
## Divisions

The Operations organization usually develops from the bottom up. This is due to the need to expand supervision as more and more resources are applied. For example, the Incident Commander or the Operations Section Chief on an incident may initially work with only a few single resources. This is shown in Figure 1-7.



*Single Resources in Operations (Figure 1-7)*

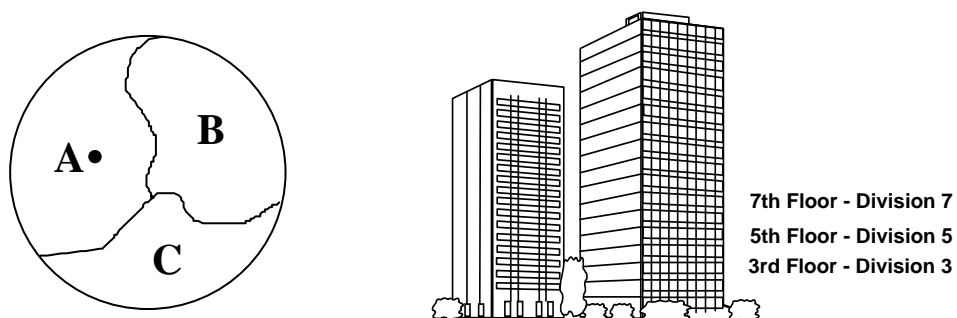
As more resources are added to the incident, another layer of organization may be needed within the Operations Section to maintain proper span of control. Normally, this will be done at the Division or Group level as shown in Figure 1-8.



*Examples of Two Divisions Within the Operations Section (Figure 1-8)*

The goal is to keep the organization as simple and as streamlined as possible, and not to overextend the span of control.

A Division is established to divide an incident geographically. How that will be done will be determined by the needs of the incident. Divisions covering an area on the ground are usually labeled clockwise by letters of the alphabet. Within a building, divisions are often designated by floor numbers, i.e., the seventh floor would be Division 7, Figure 1-9. The important thing to remember about ICS divisions is that they describe some geographical area related to incident operations.



### *Examples of Dividing an Incident Geographically (Figure 1-9)*

#### Groups

Groups are established to describe functional areas of operation. The kind of group to be established will be determined by the needs of an incident. For example, in an earthquake incident with widespread structural damage, search and rescue activity would be organized geographically, using divisions.

A specialized resource team, using dogs or electronic equipment in an earthquake, or a salvage group in a maritime incident may be designated as functional groups. Groups will work wherever they are needed, and will not be assigned to any single division.

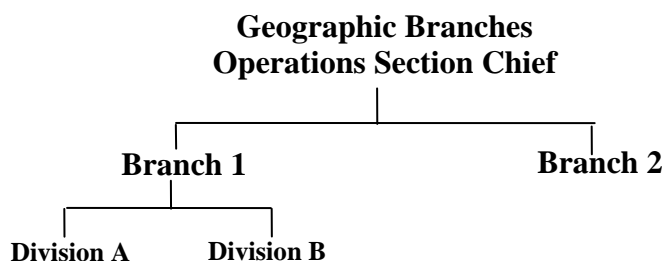
Divisions and Groups can be used together on an incident. Divisions and Groups are at an equal level in the organization. One does not supervise the other. However, when a functional group is working within a division on a special assignment, division and group supervisors must closely coordinate their activities. Division and Group Supervisors always report to the Incident Commander unless the Operations Section Chief and/or Branch Director positions have been established. Deputies are not used at the Division and Group level.

#### Branches

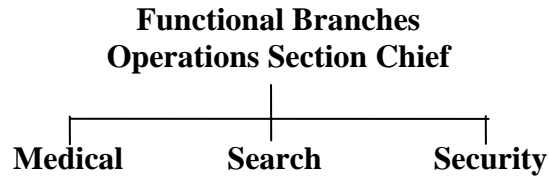
On some incidents, it may be necessary to establish a level of organization within the Operations Section called Branches. Branches are between the Operations Section Chief and the Division/Group.

Reasons to use Branches on an incident or an event.

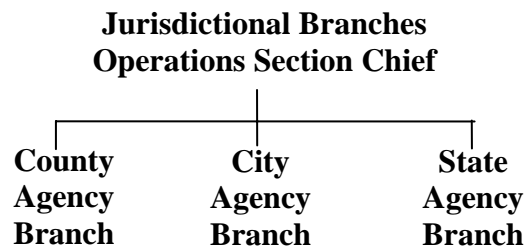
- Geographic Branches - If the number of Divisions and Groups exceeds the recommended Span of Control, another level of management based on Geographic factors is necessary. Geographic Branches are often established around natural terrain features, e.g. rivers, roads, etc.



- **Functional Branches** - Some kinds of incidents have multiple disciplines involved, e.g., police, fire, search and rescue, and medical, that may create the need to set up incident operations around a functional branch structure.



- **Jurisdictional Branches** - In some incidents it may be better to organize the incident around jurisdictional lines. In these situations, Branches may be set up to reflect differences in the agencies involved. For example, in flooding, earthquake, or wildfire incidents, federal, county, and city property all could be simultaneously affected. One way of organizing operations in these kinds of incidents is to designate a separate Branch for each of the agencies involved.



*Examples of Branches (Figure 1-10)*

Each branch that is activated will have a Branch Director.

Deputies may be used at the Branch level.

There are two other parts of the Operations Section that you may need to understand.

### Air Operations:

If established separately at an incident, Air Operations will be activated at the Branch level within the Operations Section. Usually this is done on incidents that may have complex needs for the use of aircraft in both tactical and logistical operations.

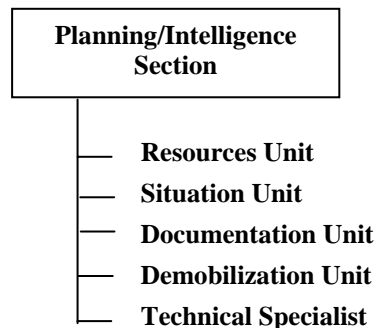
### Staging Areas:

Staging Areas may be established wherever necessary to temporarily locate resources awaiting assignment. Staging Areas and the resources within them will always be under the control of the Operations Section Chief. Staging Areas will be discussed later under incident facilities.

### Summary:

There is no one “best” way to organize an incident. The organization should develop to meet the functions required. The characteristics of the incident and the management needs of the Incident Commander will determine what organization elements should be established. The incident organization may change over time to reflect the various phases of the incident.

## 2. Planning/Intelligence Section



*Planning/Intelligence Section (Figure 1-11)*

Briefly stated, the major activities of the Planning/Intelligence Section are to:

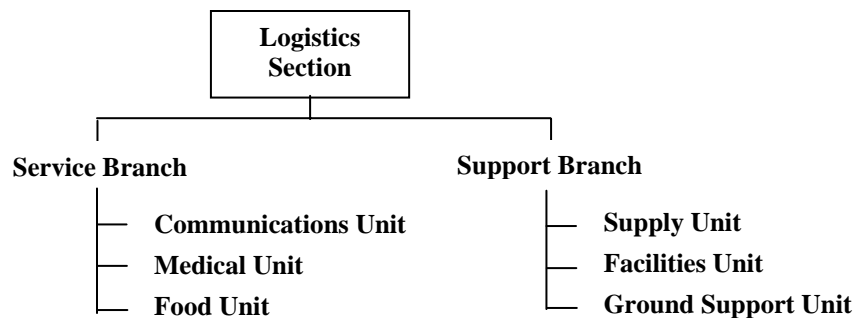
- Collect, evaluate, and display information about the incident.
- Develop Incident Action Plans for each operational period, conduct long-range planning, and develop plans for demobilization at the end of the incident.
- Maintain resource status information on all equipment and personnel assigned to the incident.
- Maintain incident documentation.



Technical Specialists assigned to the incident should report to the Planning/Intelligence Section if established. Depending on their assignment, Technical Specialists may work within the Planning/Intelligence Section, or be reassigned to other incident areas.

Several Planning/Intelligence Section Units may be established. Duties of each Unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the Units may be required, and they will be activated based upon need. Additional Planning Units may be added within span of control limitation. For example, some long-term incidents may want to establish an Advance Planning Unit to address longer range needs. Planning/Intelligence Section Units are shown in Figure 1-11.

### 3. Logistics Section



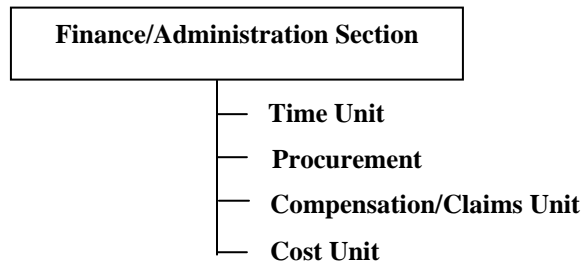
*Branches and Units in the Logistics Section (Figure 1-12)*

The Logistics Section is responsible for all of the services and support needs of an incident, including obtaining and maintaining essential personnel, facilities, equipment, and supplies.

The Incident Commander will determine the need to establish a Logistics Section on the incident. This is usually determined by the size of the incident, complexity of support, and how long the incident may last. Once the IC determines that there is a need to establish a separate logistics function, an individual will be assigned as the Logistics Section Chief.

Six functional units can be established. Depending upon the incident, and the discipline involved, additional units may be necessary, for example, a personnel unit, or volunteer coordination unit. If necessary, a two-branch structure can be used to facilitate span of control. The titles of the units are self-descriptive. Detailed duties of each unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the units may be required, and they will be established based upon need. Branches and Units in the Logistics Section are shown in Figure 1-12.

#### 4. Finance/Administration Section



*Finance/Administration Section Units (Figure 1-13)*

The IC will determine if there is a need for a Finance/Administration Section, and designate an individual to perform that role. If the Finance/Administration Section is not established, the IC will perform all finance functions.

The Finance/Administration Section is set up for any incident that may require on-site financial management. Larger incidents are using a Finance/Administration Section to monitor costs.

Smaller incidents may also require certain Finance/Administration functions. For example, the Incident Commander may establish one or more units of the Finance/Administration Section for such things as procuring special equipment, contracting with a vendor, or for making cost estimates of alternative strategies. The IC may for example, establish a Cost Analyst as a Technical Specialist, or may only establish a Cost Unit without necessity to activate a Finance/Administration Section.

The Finance/Administration Section may establish four units as necessary. Duties of each unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the units may be required, and they will be established based upon need.

Finance/Administration Section Units are shown in Figure 1-13.

#### C. Organization Terminology

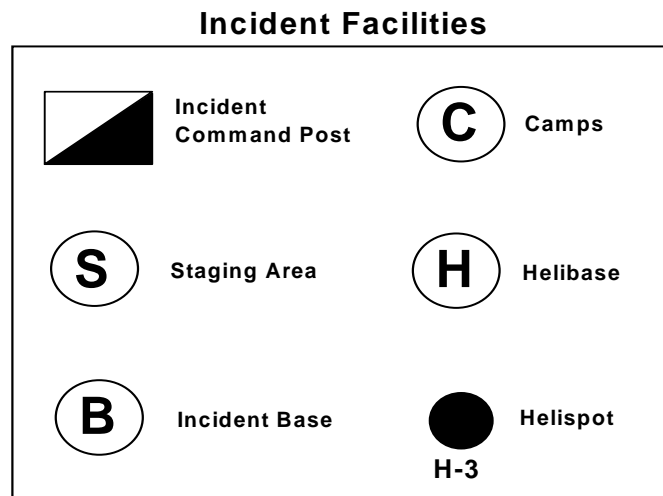
At each level in the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinctive titles, as shown in Figure 1-14.

Primary Position	Title	Support Position
Incident Commander	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
Section	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Single Resource	Use Unit Designation	N/A

*Use of ICS Organizational Terminology (Figure I-14)*

#### D. Incident Facilities

Facilities will be established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities. Not all of those listed below will necessarily be used.



*ICS Facilities (Figure I-15)*

Each of the facilities is briefly described below:

- **Incident Command Post (ICP)** - The location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is only one ICP for each incident or event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post.
- **Staging Areas** - Locations at which resources are kept while awaiting incident assignment. Most large incidents will have a Staging Area, and some incidents may have several. Staging Areas will be managed by a Staging Area Manager who reports

to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if an Operations Section has not been established.

- Base - The location at the incident at which primary service and support activities are performed. Not all incidents will have a Base. There will only be one Base for each incident.
- Camps - Incident locations where resources may be kept to support incident operations. Camps differ from Staging Areas in that essential support operations are done at Camps, and resources at Camps are not always immediately available for use. Not all incidents will have camps.
- Helibase - A location in and around an incident area at which helicopters may be parked, maintained, fueled, and equipped for incident operations. Very large incidents may require more than one Helibase.
- Helispots - Helispots are temporary locations where helicopters can land and load and off-load personnel, equipment, and supplies. Large incidents may have several Helispots.

Some incidents may require the designation of other special purpose facilities than those stated above. For example, a morgue facility might be required for a temporary period.

#### E. Incident Action Plan

Every incident must have an oral or written incident action plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for future actions. Incident Action Plans that include the measurable tactical operations to be achieved are always prepared around a time frame called an Operational Period.

Operational Periods can be of various lengths, but should be no longer than twenty-four hours. Twelve-hour Operational Periods are common on many large incidents. It is not unusual, however, to have much shorter Operational Periods covering, for example, two- or four-hour time periods. The length of an Operational Period will be based on the needs of the incident, and these can change over the course of the incident.

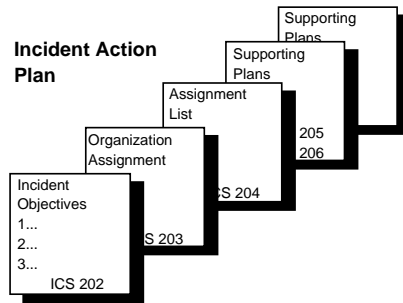
The planning for an Operational Period must be done far enough in advance to ensure that requested resources are available when the Operational Period begins.

Large incidents, which involve a partial or full activation of the ICS organization, should have a written Incident Action Plan. Incidents extending through an Operational Period should also have a written Incident Action Plan to ensure continuity due to personnel changes. The decision to have a written incident action plan will be made by the Incident Commander.

Small multi-jurisdictional incidents may use the Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) for the initial written Incident Action Plan. The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) provides for the

documentation of current objectives, actions, organization and shows status of resources on-scene and ordered.

Several forms have been developed to help in preparing the Incident Action Plan. These are shown in Figure 1-16. They will be discussed in other modules.



*Forms Commonly Used in the Incident Action Plan (Figure 1-16)*

Essential elements in any written or oral Incident Action Plan are:

- Statement of Objectives - Appropriate to the overall incident.
- Organization - Describes what parts of the ICS organization will be in place for each Operational Period.
- Assignments to Accomplish the Objectives - These are normally prepared for each Division or Group and include the strategy, tactics, and resources to be used.
- Supporting Material - Examples can include a map of the incident, communications plan, medical plan, traffic plan, etc.

The Incident Action Plan must be made known to all incident supervisory personnel. This can be done through briefings, by distributing a written plan prior to the start of the Operational Period, or by both methods.

#### F. Span of Control

Span of Control is a critical management concept in ICS. It refers to the maximum number of resources a person can effectively manage. Effective supervision can be provided in a ratio of one supervisor to 3 to 7 reporting units. However a ratio of 1 to 5 is recommended. If the number of reporting elements falls outside of those ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There will be exceptions, for example in some applications specially trained resources, (i.e.; hand crews, squads or teams) may utilize a larger Span of Control.

*Recommended ICS Span of Control Guideline (Figure 1-17)*

G. Common Responsibilities

There are certain common responsibilities or instructions associated with an incident assignment that everyone assigned to an incident should follow. Following these simple guidelines will make your job easier and result in a more effective operation.

1. Receive your incident assignment from your organization. This should include, at a minimum, a reporting location and time, likely length of assignment, brief description of assignment, travel information, and communication methods. Each responding agency may have additional requirements.
2. Bring any specialized supplies or equipment required for your job. Be sure you have adequate personal supplies to last you for the expected stay.
3. Upon arrival, follow the Check-in procedure for the incident. Check-in locations may be found at:
  - Incident Command Post (at the Resources Unit)
  - Staging Areas
  - Base or Camps
  - Helibases
  - Division or Group Supervisors (for direct assignments).
4. Radio communications on an incident should use clear text, that is, no radio codes. Refer to incident facilities by the incident name, for example, Rossmoor Incident Command Post, or 42nd Street Staging Area. Refer to personnel by ICS title not numeric code or name.
5. Obtain a briefing from your immediate supervisor. Be sure you understand your assignment.
6. Acquire necessary work materials, locate, and set up your workstation.
7. Organize and brief any subordinates assigned to you.
8. Brief your relief at the end of each Operational Period and, as necessary, at the time you are demobilized from the incident.

9. Complete required forms and reports and give them to your supervisor or to the Documentation Unit before you leave.
10. Demobilize according to plan.

### III. Conclusion

The information you have learned through this short self-study module will provide you with sufficient general background to understand the principles and primary organizational elements of the ICS.

You are encouraged to expand your understanding of ICS by taking other modules or courses.